

TITLE: The Role of Enhanced Condom Availability in HIV Prevention Programs

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BACKGROUND/OBJECTIVES: Successful HIV prevention programs often have many different components and it is difficult to determine the importance of each component. Enhancing the availability of condoms has generally not been recognized as an HIV prevention intervention but may be effective distinct from other components.

METHODS: We reviewed published reports of HIV prevention interventions to determine the role and assess the effectiveness of condom availability programs in increasing condom use.

RESULTS: Enhanced condom availability has been included in three types of HIV prevention programs: *Mass Campaigns* enhance condom availability through large scale distribution of condoms at no charge or through changes in condom price or retail placement. These campaigns have been successful in increasing condom use even when no media campaigns have supported them. *Site-Based Availability* programs provide easy access to condoms in sites such as clinics and schools, and have been associated with increased condom use. *Personal Interaction* programs are based on contact between individuals, such as individual or group counseling, peer programs, or street outreach. In general these programs, which resulted in increased condom use, include condom distribution to participants, although most provide condoms in the control groups as well.

CONCLUSION: Enhanced condom availability appears to improve condom use even when not combined with counseling or other forms of communication promoting condom use. This intervention may be a crucial but overlooked component of other successful interventions as well. Enhanced condom availability should be emphasized more in HIV prevention programs.

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